

Ten Steps to Creating Your Own Marketing Plan

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Introduction

This paper was originally prepared for presentation at the Australian Securities Commission (ASC) Network Librarians Conference held in Sydney, in June 1994. The purpose of the paper was to provide the ASC Librarians with a framework to assist them in the development and implementation of marketing practices within each region. Consequently, the examples are ASC specific. For the purposes of this article, the paper has been revised and updated to reflect the current ASC environment where applicable, and to provide concrete examples of how marketing principles can be applied within the special library context.

1. What is a 'Marketing Plan' ?

"Marketing achieves the best possible combination of services, products and expertise, designed to meet client needs. The product or service is examined in the light of the needs of the target group, a strategy is developed to meet these needs and finally evaluation takes place, with strategies being revised, corrected or modified."
(Charleston 1993, p1)

"Marketing starts with the users, ascertaining their wants and, for existing services, finding out how they want them presented, packaged, priced, made available, and how they want to hear about them. It then formulates a mix of strategies blended to satisfy those wants."
(Morgan and Noble 1992, p284)

Marketing is a process, and according to Lois Jennings, places the emphasis on relating 'output to demand' (Jennings 1983, p15)

It is possible to design and develop a general marketing plan to cater for all major library services, and/or to produce a more detailed plan for the marketing of specific products and/or services. The ASC NSW Regional Office has experienced success, in particular, with the marketing of specific services such as networked CD-ROMs, implementation of electronic current awareness services and the introduction of Internet services.

The following steps discussed within this paper are designed to highlight the stages in creating a marketing plan and the type of issues that need to be considered.

2. *Describe the context of the library and its environment (i.e. internal/external).*

Evaluating the environment within which the library is placed, allows the librarian to set any marketing strategy within its operational context. Analysis of the environment serves as the preliminary step to development of strategy and market mix.

Immediate external environment

The NSW Regional Office Library is a special library, existing specifically to meet the information needs of the ASC. Its subject specialisations are Corporations and Company Law, Securities Regulation and White Collar Crime. There are approximately 240 staff in the NSW Regional Office.

The NSW Regional Office has recently restructured to form nine programs and practices. They are:

Program	Staff
Legal Practice	Lawyers and Paralegals
Community Response	Investigators, Lawyers
Corporate Investigations	Investigators, Aust Federal Police
Corporate Finance	Accountants, Financial Analysts
Managed Funds Personal Investment (MFPI)	Financial Advisers, Accountants
Markets	Futures and Stock Brokers
Accounting Practice	Accountants
Corporate Regulatory Services Management	Intelligence Officers, Library Staff, Records
Corporate Services	Personnel, Finance, Information Technology

Within the major divisions exist smaller units known as teams. These groups are often cross-divisional, to draw upon the expertise of specialists and generalists alike.

“The primary responsibility of the librarian is to establish and maintain liaison with other department and division managers, to ascertain needs and evaluate trends, and to direct the work of the library so that it meets the current needs and is prepared for changes in direction before they occur.” (Echelmann, cited by St Clair 1990, p215)

Outside external environment

The NSW Regional Office Library sits within the wider context of the national body of the Australian Securities Commission. Other factors to consider include: its economic environment, as in its budgetary allocations; its political environment, as in current political climate, incidents etc; its legal environment, as in the influence of changing legislation and case law; and its social environment, as in prevailing ethics of society and the technological environment, such as the network environment of Banyan Vines and the restrictions that can place on future technological developments in terms of hardware/software compatibility

Internal environment

This identifies the library in terms of its staffing, resources, finances and physical facilities. In staffing, consider the issue of numbers, competency levels, skills, qualifications, values, attitudes, preferences/interests, hours worked, commitment etc

3. *Identify the product/resource/service to be marketed.*

Set objectives appropriate to the idea/concept or change to be initiated. These should be in line with the overall objectives of the library, and the ASC as the host organisation. It is useful to refer to inhouse reference tools at this point, such as the Corporate Plan, Regional Business Plans, the Library Business Plan, and thus focussing to the Library Marketing Plan. They should each dovetail into the other to form a balanced planning document.

Marketing "begins with a clear definition of the library's mission in the parent organisation" (St Clair 1990, p213)

4. *Undertake a market analysis.*

- Identify the target market. Be specific as to key groups and their possible breakdown to smaller units. For example: the Corporate Finance, MFPI, and Markets Groups can be broken down into the following sub-groups:

Accountants	Financial Analysts	Stockbrokers	Admin Support
Executive Directors	Team Leaders	Non-Team Leaders	
Computer Literate	Computer Illiterate		
Library Users	Library Non-Users		

- Determine user needs through market research. Use of surveys, management reports, statistics, interviews etc. (both qualitative and quantitative).
- Identify competitors to the supply of product/resource/service, both internal and external.

“Marketing, however, involves more than just promotion or advertising. marketing consists of identifying publics, or user groups and developing and delivering those products or services that fit the needs of those groups” (Stone 1987, p103)

Within the ASC NSW Regional Office, the experience has been that specific targeting to user groups, and focussing upon a particular need of that group, promotes acceptance of a service or product to a higher degree than a general promotional exercise.

5. *Library analysis of strengths and weaknesses.*

Consider strengths and weaknesses of the library in relation to the marketing proposal. High Need and High Competency Levels = Marketing Opportunity.

It is the incidents where the information need is high, and the skill levels and resources are also high, where success is guaranteed.

6. *Undertake a SWOT analysis. (Strengths/ Weaknesses/ Opportunities /Threats)*

This process is undertaken as the basis for decision making and to assess the future scope and direction of the library in regards to specific products/resources /services

If strengths match the opportunity, then the marketing project should proceed and has a high success probability

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Most Likely	Possible
Threats	Possible	Unlikely

(Nicholson 1993 p3-4)

“PR cannot: change the facts, motivate dissatisfied employees, hide poor management policies or operate without relevant information”
(Austin 1985, p44)

7. *Product/resource/service analysis.*

- List the advantages/disadvantages of the characteristics of the product/resource/service.
- Identify the position of the concept in its lifestyle. ie Is it a new innovation? Is it new technology? Is it being replaced by another product? etc
- Assess the potential of the product/resource/service. How would it apply to your library?
- Ensure easy accessibility and instruction to the proposed product/resource /service
- Identify any competitors regarding the provision of the product/resource/service.
- Attractive presentation of the product/resource/service.
- Effective and efficient distribution of the product/resource/service.

“For as many people who know enough to use library resources, there is an equal number, and more who do not ” (Gibson 1984, pp69-70)

8. *Link to the strategic plan and formulate strategies.*

“Write out a plan, limit yourself to three to four achievable, measurable goals, be specific, target your audience and identify user needs.” (Fritts 1987, p15)

By this stage, your documentation should be starting to reflect a certain framework, with continuity between other organisational planning documents such as the Business and Strategic Plans.

9. *Cost identification.*

Successful marketing and implementation of a product/service will depend on an accurate costing. Each organisation will have its own method of calculation. In the ASC this breakdown can be:

Staff costs:	calculated by the % of time spent
Materials costs:	itemised account
Overhead Costs:	calculated at 35% of staff salary to include overheads and ongoing costs in the ASC

(Source of figure: ASC Human Resources Branch Policy)

Please note, the approach adopted is depend on the purpose of the costing and the requirements of the organisation Approaches that could be applied include:

Breakeven Analysis:	degree of usage = cost of service
Cost Benefit Analysis:	client needs focus > self service
Cost Effectiveness:	cost of service compared with cost of other sources

10. Develop the market mix

This is the point where all the information gathered in the previous stages is drawn together, and alternative solutions put forward in a bid to match the identified needs with the proposed product/resource/service The availability of resources is considered, as are the various strengths and weaknesses that have been identified It is important that evaluative techniques and methods are incorporated into the plan, and that assessment not only takes place on a regular basis, but is revised at point of need as well.

"A program developed as part of a carefully planned market strategy should never be left alone; all programs or products should be reviewed constantly for market vitality." (Stone 1987, p107)

"It must be emphasised that all elements of the marketing mix are important because consumer perception of the product is based on the sum total of these elements" (Weingand 1984 pp49-50)

Select the strategy that best suits the expressed needs and the resources available, and you are ready to implement your marketing plan. The value in a marketing plan is that it is flexible and has the potential to be changed readily

Please note: a marketing plan is a living document It is never complete. Its capacity to change and bend with an organisation's requirements and circumstances is only impeded by the decision to leave it stagnant and unrevised Keep your plan alive and focussed and the successful usage of library products/resources or services will continue to interact with the needs and requirements of the client.

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